* A Central Electricity Regulatory Commission has been set up and States are expected to set up State level Commissions.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO UNSTARRED QUESTIONS

Assessment made by M/s. Merrill Lynch Regarding Export Growth

1551. SHRI JIBON ROY:
SHRI C.O. POULOSE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the assessment made by M/s. Merrill Lynch that there would be no export growth by India during 1998-99;

(b) if so, the reasons given for the assessment;

(c) whether Government have reviewed the matter to find out why there was no export growth despite drastic fall in value of rupee; and

(d) the findings of Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) While no specific reasons have been given in the assessment, a slow down of western economy has been cited as a possible reasons for future weakening of exports;

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The exports were affected due to a general slow down in world trade, especially recession in many countries in South East Asia, Japan and Germany, domestic supply constraints in some sectors such as agriculture commodities and barriers faced in markets of European Union

Export of Fruits and Vegetable

1552. SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what are the different fruits and vegetables being exported;

(b) whether Government are aware that due to such exports the prices of fruits and vegetables have gone sky high in the country; and

(c) what stpes Government are taking to stop unlimited export of fruits and vegetables?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): (a) The different fruits and vegetables exported from the country include onions, potatoes, tomatoes, cucumbers, fresh mushrooms, peas, green chilly, apples, bananas, walnut kernals, fresh pineapple, guava, mangoes, fresh oranges, fresh grapes, grapefruit, papaya, custard apple, strawberries, cherries, pomegranates and chikoos.

(b) and (c) The policy regarding exports of agricultural products is governed principally by the concerns of India's food security, maximising farm income and earning foreign exchange. Review of export performance of agricultural products is an ongoing process and accordingly policy interventions are made, as and when considered necessary to protect the domestic consumers and need to retain export markets. The total quantity of fruits and vegetables exported from the country accounts for merely around 1 percent of the total production in the country and is generally unlikely to have an adverse impact on the domestic prices. The Government has banned the export of onions with effect from 12.10.1998.

Steps to increase Exports of Agricultural and Industrial Produce

1553. SHRI GOVINDRAM MIRI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state the details of the steps taken/contemplated by Government to increase exports of our agricultural and industrial produce?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE (SHRI RAMAKRISHNA HEGDE): Some of the steps taken to promote exports of industrial produce include incentives under the Exim Policy like Duty Exemption Scheme, Duty Entitlement Passbook Scheme, Duty Drawback Scheme, assistance from Market Development Fund, reduction in interest rate on export credit, facility of legal undertaking in lieu of Bank Guarantee to manufacture exporters, exemption from special additional duty on all export promotion schemes.

Some of the steps taken/proposed tc be taken specifically for enhancement of exports of agricultural and processed food products include:

1. Providing assistance for raising small and large nurseries for production of good quality planting material upgradation of technical knowhow of farmers through demonstrations, trainings and publicity, rejuvenation of old orchards, area expansion, supply of minikits for vegetables, improving productivity and training of farmers.
2. Provision of soft loans for setting up of grading/processing centres, auction platforms, ripening/curing chambers and quality testing equipment.
3. Providing financial assistance to exporters/growers/Cooperative Societies for development of infrastructural facilities such as purcahse of specialised transport units, establishment of pre-cooling/could storage facilities, integrated post-harvest handing systems (pack houses).
4. Grant of financial assistance for improved packaging, strengthening of quality control and modernization of processing units.
5. Establishment of vapour heat treatment facilties for improving the acceptability of the product expecially the mangoes in overseas markets.
6. Grant of Air Freight Subsidy for exports of floricultural items and selected fresh fruits and vegetables and fruits.
7. Arranging promotional campaigns such as buyer-seller meets and participation in important international fairs and exhibitions.
8. Setting up of integrated cargo handling and cold storage facilities at various international Airporst for handing export of perishable items such as fresh fruits and vegetables.
9. Providing assistance in development of data and dissemination of market information.
10. Providing assistance for setting up of laboratories for testing of products to ensure quality, technology transfer, process upgradation and product development.

Export of Rice

1554. SHRI K. RAHMAN KHAN: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) how much rice was exported from India during 1996-97, 1997-98 and 1998-99 and the foreign exchange earned;

(b) whether export of rice will not effect the prices of rice locally;

(c) what are the incentives provided for export of rice;

(d) who are the major competitors for rice export, besides Pakistan; and

(e) which are the countries who are importing rice from India?